Chief Minister's conference on impact of WTO agreement

648. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased so state:

(a) whether a conference of Chief Ministers was held in Delhi to discuss the catastrophic impact of World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement of Indian agriculture and farmers; and

(b) if so, the details of discussion that took place and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation organized a Conference of Chief Ministers under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister on 21st May, 2001 at New Delhi to discuss issues relating to the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and Food Management. The Chief Minister of 12 States and Union Ministers of Agriculture, Finance, Commerce and Industries, Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution and Deputy Chairman (Planning Commission) participated in the Conference, besides representatives of other States and Union Ministries.

Discussion were held on the following agenda items:

— Agriculture Production Strategies: Diversification, post-harvest interventions and value addition,

— Removal of restrictions on movement and stocking of food and agricultural produce,

— Operation of the Essential Commodity Act, 1955 as applied to food and agricultural produce,

— Decentralisation of procurement and distribution,

— Impact of WTO on Indian Agriculture.

The Conference provided an opportunity for a frank exchange of views and sharing of concerns and suggestions. The Prime Minister, during his concluding remarks, called for awareness building measures in order to remove misconceptions relating to WTO. He announced the constitution of a Standing Committee of Union Ministers and Chief Ministers to consider issues concerning agricultural strategies, food management and promotion of agricultural exports in the wake of WTO Agreement on Agriculture.

The first meeting for the Standing Committee on the Union Ministers and Chief Ministers on Food Management and Agricultural Exports was held on 6th July, 2001, where the following agenda items were discussed:—

(i) Enhancing the efficiency of procurement and reducing the cost of distribution of foodgrains under PDS through decentralizedand active involvement of the State.

(ii) Implementation of the Food for Work Programme and Grain Bank Scheme.

(iii) Review of Essential Commodities Act and Control Orders to ensure free movement.

An Inter-Ministerial Group has been constituted by the Standing Committee to work out modalities of Food for Work Programme and Grain Bank Scheme. The Group is expected to submit its report in four weeks. On restructuring of the system of procurement of foodgrains, it was decided that the Government of India would work out a detailed proposal in consultation with the States. There was general consensus that the restrictions on movement of foodgrains need to be removed and that controls on trade of foodgrains need to be reviewed.

With regard to building of awareness on WTO related issues, a series of State-level meetings are planned, two of which have already been held.

Infrastructure at Central Agricultural University, Imphal

649. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) when the infrastructure of the Headquarter of the Central Agricultural University, Imphal would be completed;

(b) the funds allotted for the year 2001-2002 for the purpose; and

(c) the reasons for the delay in the completion of construction of University Headquarter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) Sir, the construction of heaquarter buildings has not been started since there is no provision of funds for the construction of headquarter buildings in Phase-I.